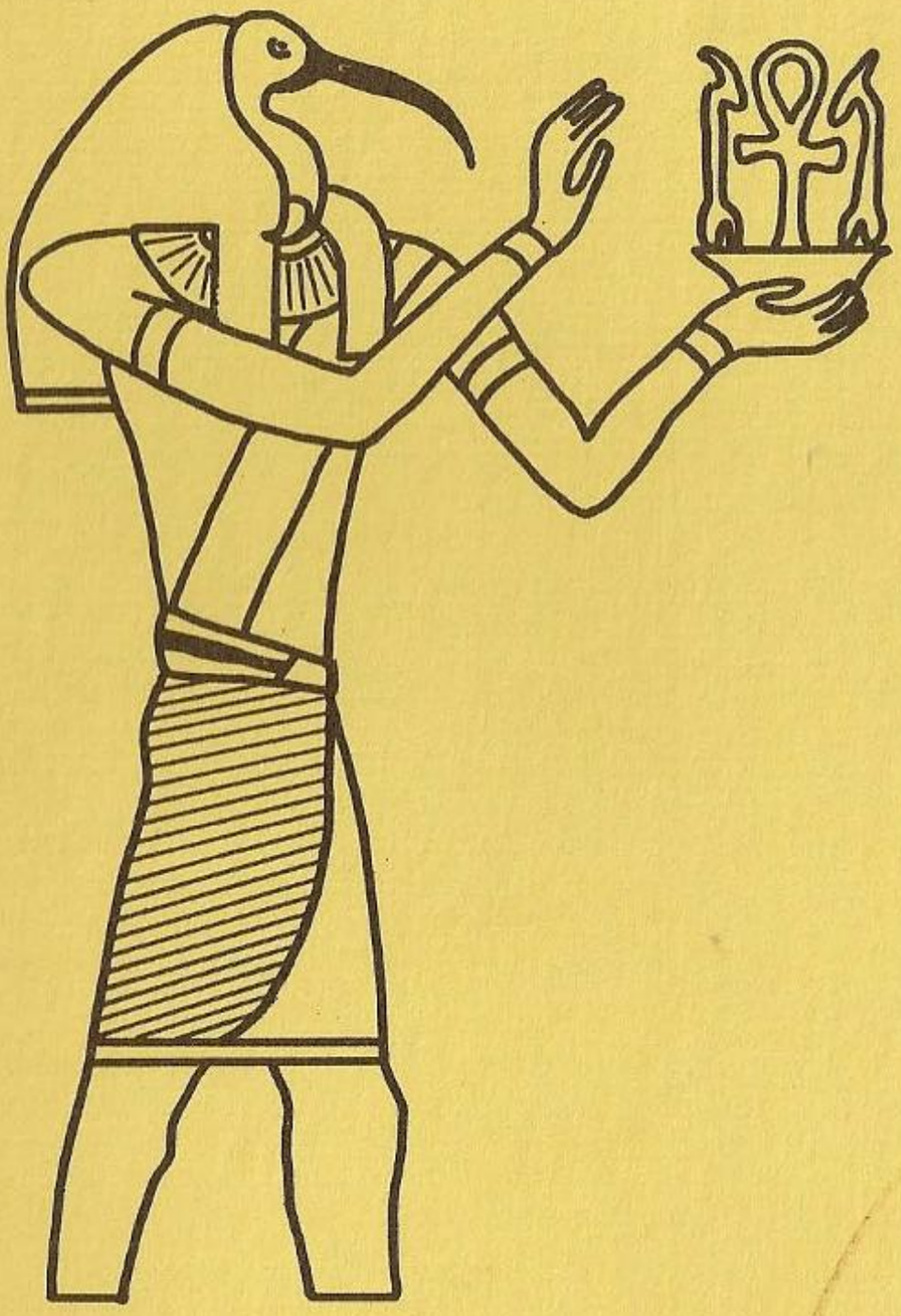
the ROHMER REVIEW



No. 6

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Readers who have had Sax Rohmer's occult novel THE ORCHARD OF TEARS on their want-lists will be pleased to learn that the first U.S. edition of this book has recently appeared. The publisher is TRR subscriber Joseph G. Amedeo, operating under his Bookfinger imprint. Mr. Amedeo is offering the book to fellow TRR subscribers at the special price of $4.50; the price asked by specialist dealers and search services will be considerably higher. The address: Bookfinger, P. O. Box 487, Peter Stuyvesant Station, New York, N.Y. 10009. The book is a facsimile of the first British edition, in a quality binding, and matches the same publisher's earlier editions of THE SINS OF SÉVERAC BABLON and THE EXPLOITS OF CAPTAIN O'HAGAN. (The earlier books are still available, priced at $4.50 and $4.00 respectively; again, these are special prices for TRR subscribers only.)

Contributing editor Luther Norris continues his series of well-printed and excellently illustrated chapbooks. The two most recent additions to the line are THE HOLY QUIRE, a collection of Sherlockian essays by Harry Hartman, illustrated by William Dixon, and THE MISSION THAT FAILED by Edgar Wallace. The latter brings back into print for the first time in more than seventy years the very rare first book by Wallace, a slim collection of Kiplingesque verse. These chapbooks are available at $3.00 each from Luther Norris, 3844 Watseka Avenue, Culver City, California 90230.

Another of our contributing editors has also turned publisher. Andrew Jay Peck has recently published THE DATE BEING-?, a booklet which presents in tabular form a summary of the principal chronologies so far offered for the Holmes canon. The booklet is spiral-bound, in heavy covers, and is available for $3.00 from Andy at 2968 Perry Avenue, Bronx, N. Y. 10458.

For readers who are interested in mystery and detective fiction in general, there are two excellent journals being published. *The Armchair Detective* is a quarterly, edited and published by Allen J. Hubin, 3656 Midland, White Bear Lake, Minnesota 55110; subscriptions are $4.00 per year. Each issue contains at least 70 pages (8½ x 11) of critical, bibliographical and biographical commentary on mystery fiction and its authors. *The Mystery Reader's Newsletter* is a bi-monthly publication, edited by Mrs. Lianne Carlin, P. O. Box 113, Melrose, Mass. 02176. Subscriptions are $3.00 per year. Reviews, interviews, film notes, articles, checklists...

To conclude these notes, we abandon editors and publishers and mention a book dealer. Vernon Lay (52, Oakleigh Gardens, Whetstone, London N20 9AB, England) is a bookseller specializing in mystery, sf, and fantasy. He operates primarily on a want-list basis. Try him for British editions of Rohmer or other mystery/fantasy authors. ●

Live Instruments of Villainy

by

Sax Rohmer

Although I claim the honour of having popularised venomous insects as instruments of villainy, I have sometimes thought that I may have allowed my imagination to run away with me in regard to the size of certain creatures employed by Dr. Fu Manchu.

I recall having seen some uncommonly handsome millipedes, and at Assouan I was present at the execution of quite the largest scorpion I could conscientiously have invented.

On another occasion an American acquaintance, who occupied a room near mine in an hotel in Colon, turned down his sheets to discover that the bed was already occupied by a thing which resembled a giant earwig. It was, I suppose, fully seven inches long and endowed with an unpleasant vivacity. Pursuit was long and stern, and its destruction no easy matter, for it had a shell-like back. Closer inspection, which only became possible or safe when sentence had been carried out, showed the insect to belong to the centipede family.

I was shown a millipede captured somewhere in Mexico (this time safely confined in a glass case). It had the curious, feverish activity of its kind, which at once fascinates and appals me. But its outstanding characteristic was its colour. Some six inches long, the thing was post office red... and it carried enough venom to kill ten men!

But in Panama I made the acquaintance of a really extraordinary character. I am sorry that I cannot recall his name, for he is a recognised authority on the fauna of the Canal Zone. Quite by accident I came upon his private collection, and first escorted by his daughter, who is almost equally familiar with the subject, and later joined by the doctor in person, I inspected creatures hideous and creatures beautiful from the dense jungles which mantle the Isthmus of Darien.

Natives bring the things in and are paid appropriately in accordance with the rarity of their finds. The Zone is rich in dangerous members of the cat family, and produces some fine poisonous reptiles. One is forced to salute the memory of that cold-blooded adventurer, Sir Henry Morgan, on merely glimpsing the pass across which he led his buccaneers to the sack of Panama. Bristol has bred some stout lads!

From the Manchester EMPIRE NEWS, 20 March 1938;
reprinted by permission of Mrs. Elizabeth Sax Rohmer.

Leaning over a low wall, I looked down into a snake pit. It contained a pool and a number of rocks. The interior walls were made smooth in order that the exhibits might be prevented from climbing them. Here I saw coiled snakes and lizards of singular appearance, including a Gila Monster---the only lizard known to possess poison fangs. There was a Jesus Lizard, so named because he runs across water. I actually saw him do so.

But the amazing moment came when my host vaulted over the wall and dropped into the middle of his venomous collection! Calmly puffing at his pipe, he grabbed and captured snakes whose bites are in some cases so deadly that recovery is rare. He held them up for my inspection, squeezing their throats and drawing attention to their poison fangs, then cast them aside with a nonchalance which excited my keen admiration.

But as I looked down suddenly I beheld a thing darting actively from side to side as the doctor moved about in that pit of death---a thing which made me forget the lizards, the snakes, and the centipedes. It was a gigantic black spider. Its body was the size of a hen's egg, and its legs, allowing for their covering of jet-black hair, were nearly of the thickness of a man's fingers. Its eyes, whenever it came out from shadow to sunlight, twinkled like tiny diamonds.

"For heaven's sake!" said I. "What is that?"

"Oh, that!" said the doctor, following the direction of my fixed stare. "That's a very good specimen of a bird-eating spider. The black variety rarely attains that size. I have never seen a larger one."

Whereupon, to my amazement and horror, he began to stalk the spider! Presently, as the thing tried to run up a wall, he grabbed it, held it inverted, hairy legs kicking in the air, and then set it on the back of his left hand!

For some reason which I cannot explain, except that there are people in the world who possess this curious power, the spider, clinging to his hand, stayed quite motionless. He held it up for my inspection. He was a tall man, and as he stretched his arm the spider---which I had seen jump quite two feet---was less than that distance below me!

"What would happen if it bit you?"

"Bad business; but I've been bitten so often that I'm getting on for immune."

"But if it bit anyone else?"

"Very bad business," said the doctor nonchalantly, and brushed the dreadful thing from his hand as one brushes a fly aside. It fell with an audible plop to the floor of the pit and darted away under cover of a piece of rock.

I have never before seen a white man handle venomous insects in this way. ●

Commentary

by
Douglas A. Rossman

Sax Rohmer did not let his imagination run away with him concerning the size of the venomous arthropods employed by the Devil Doctor (none of which happened to be insects, save for the flea-tsetse fly hybrid he dreamed up for DAUGHTER OF FU MANCHU), but he certainly appears to have been misinformed as to just how dangerous some of these animals are.

The scolopendra centipedes, which played so prominent a role in the opening chapters of THE INSIDIOUS DR. FU-MANCHU, may actually reach a length of one foot, and are known to feed upon small mice, birds, lizards, snakes, and toads. Although centipede bites can produce intense pain, blistering, swelling, local inflammation, and subcutaneous hemorrhaging---effects which may persist for as long as three weeks---there is only *one* authentic recorded case of a human fatality, and that was a seven-year-old child.

Rohmer's comment on the venomousness of that large Mexican millipede is definitely exaggerated. Millipedes do not have poison fangs, so their bites are innocuous. Many species do, however, possess repugnatorial glands that produce an irritating secretion. The fluid of the large tropical species has a strong caustic action that causes blackening when it contacts human skin. Later the affected area peels, leaving a wound which is very slow to heal. The fluid is particularly dangerous to the eyes; it has been known to cause blindness in domestic fowl. In some of the large tropical species the secretion can be forcefully emitted as a fine spray, to a distance of more than two feet! Some of the more interesting constituents of the fluid include hydrocyanic acid, iodine, quinine, and chlorine, the latter giving the exudate its characteristic odor. In central Mexico the Indians grind up one species of millipede together with various plants to obtain their arrow poison. (My source* did not indicate what contribution the plants make to the toxicity of the concoction, nor what prey is hunted.)

The bird-eating spiders of tropical America are in the group rather loosely called "tarantulas." They may have bodies from three to three and a half inches long, and a leg span

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*Cloudsley-Thompson, J. L. *SPIDERS, SCORPIONS, CENTIPEDES AND MITES*. Pergamon Press, Oxford. 1968.

exceeding ten inches. Despite their impressive size, however, these spiders are not particularly agressive in their dealings with humans (though I should think it indiscreet to provoke one of them deliberately) and their bites are not usually serious. Far more dangerous are some of the trap-door spiders and the black widow variety; the latter is extremely common in and around human habitations in the warmer parts of the eastern United States. Although the black widow is a small spider, its bite causes agonizing pain which is often accompanied by profuse sweating, impaired breathing, vomiting, prostration, and convulsions. Drop for drop its venom is said to be more potent than that of a rattlesnake, but the ammount injected is small; death occurred in only about five percent of the recorded cases.

Some species of scorpions are extremely dangerous to man, their venom being principally a neurotoxin not unlike cobra poison. The symptoms of scorpion poisoning are similar to those of strychnine poisoning. The venom does not produce swelling or discoloration at the site of the sting (scorpions do not have fangs---the tip of the tail is the business end); instead, the first symptom is a tightness in the throat, so that the victim tries to clear his throat of imaginary phlegm. His tongue begins to feel thick and his speech slurs. The victim becomes restless and his muscles twitch involuntarily. A series of sneezing spasms is accompanied by continuous flow of mucus from the nose and mouth, often forming a thick froth. Occasionally the heartbeat is considerably increased. In some cases, though by no means a majority, convulsions follow, the limbs are flailed wildly about and the extremities become blue before death occurs. This complex pattern of reactions may last from forty-five minutes to twelve hours. The poison also has a hemolytic action, destroying red blood cells, and it produces large quantities of an enzyme that breaks down one of the chemicals absolutely essential to the proper utilization of oxygen by the cells of the body. Even in his wildest imagination, Rohmer would have been hard pressed to match the frightening reality of a scorpion's sting.

Unless "Live Instruments of Villainy" was written with tongue in cheek and Rohmer was playing upon the unreasoning fears of the general public, it seems likely that his use of venomous arthropods in his stories reflected his own aversion to and lack of understanding about such animals. ●

Letter to Sherlock

The following letter was found between the pages of a book on bee culture in a second-hand book and curio shop in Wapping:

London
1912

My dear Holmes:

Trust this arrives before you depart for C.[1] Petrie and I board for Said tomorrow.[2] Regret that I could not get down to the Downs for a few days. The change would have been welcome after the past summer. I appreciate your reluctance to leave and take up the game again. It is good to know that M has you back in harness to cover our Western flank.[3]

To complete our earlier discussion[4], I believe that Professors Moriarty and Monde were Companions of the Si-Fan, retained for the same function.[5] It seems only a coincidence that both had the same initials[6], but there might be a deeper meaning which I cannot fathom. My recent experience of which you are aware, and yours of an earlier date, lead to the conclusion that an East breeze has been rising for some time.[7] It is too bad that you did not go to Rache-Churan instead of Lhasa in your search for the source of Moriarty's organization. As you deduced, Moriarty was only a front for a vaster criminal organization with tentacles in various capitals.[8] Moriarty's physique and mind fit him admirably for his role as a tool of Fu-Manchu.[9] He was under orders undoubtedly to "do or die" at Reichenbach.[10] That is the sort of punishment Fu-Manchu would order for the potential failure of one of his minions. May the recent fire have ended the devil doctor's career---but the organization still lives!

God speed,
Smith

Annotations by Julian L. Biggers

[1] Holmes was departing for Chicago to assume the role of Mr. Altamount, as recounted by Watson in "His Last Bow."

[2] A fortnight after the close of THE INSIDIOUS DR. FU-MANCHU. Port Said would have been the stop in Egypt used by Smith and

Petrie for a "run up the Nile" in those days.

[3] Mycroft Holmes directed the British secret service during two world wars and gave his name to the head of that organization. It was probably Mycroft who brought Smith and Holmes together to compare notes on the criminal organization threatening Western civilization.

[4] From clues in the first paragraph of the letter, it seems probable that a meeting was arranged in Mycroft's offices in London. Holmes was in London to be briefed about his assignment, while Smith was completing arrangements for his return to Burma. Smith undoubtedly knew of Holmes' encounters with Moriarty, his journey to Tibet, and related investigations.

[5] In addition to Moriarty and Monde serving Fu Manchu, we also know of Maitre Foli, the celebrated French legal advisor, being retained to serve the Doctor (FU MANCHU'S BRIDE).

[6] James Moriarty and Jenner Monde.

[7] Holmes used a similar phrase a few years later in a discussion with Watson ("His Last Bow"). Many interpreters of the Canon have thought that Holmes meant Germany or Russia. It seems apparent that his thoughts were actually of China.

[8] We learn much of the organization for which Moriarty was an agent in THE VALLEY OF FEAR and "The Final Problem." The clue for Holmes was undoubtedly Moriarty's boast, "You stand in the way not merely of an individual, but of a mighty organization, the full extent of which you, with all your cleverness, have been unable to realize." This declaration must have stung Holmes' pride and led him to review the whole problem. Perhaps additional clues were obtained to lead him to Tibet in his conversation with Moriarty at Reichenbach. Holmes' discretion may have led him in this case, as in others, to keep much of what he suspected of the Si-Fan from Watson and the world.

[9] The similarity of physiques is remarkable, with the exception of the color of the eyes. This was one feature which Fu Manchu often had to disguise. Moriarty's criminal bent of mind probably elevated him beyond the role of mere double (as in the cases of Monde and Foli) and placed him as an adjutant to Fu Manchu.

[10] Several Sherlockian scholars have speculated on the occurrence or non-occurrence of the events at Reichenbach. An excellent summary of this speculation is contained in Baring-Gould's THE ANNOTATED SHERLOCK HOLMES, Volume II. The simplest explanation is to accept the report of Holmes, but with the understanding that Moriarty was under orders from Fu Manchu and the Si-Fan to stop Holmes or die in the attempt. ●

The Lost "Eye"

by R. E. Briney

Sax Rohmer's mystery play THE EYE OF SIVA opened at the New Theater in London on Wednesday evening, August 8, 1923. It was an elaborate production, involving exotic scenery, trapdoors, sound effects, flashing lights, and a live female leopard. The melodrama featured Rohmer's detective character, Paul Harley, but the demands of the dramatic form caused him to be altered somewhat from the familiar protagonist of BAT WING, FIRE-TONGUE, and numerous short stories. In the play, Harley was identified as a Secret Service agent, formerly stationed in Egypt; he was frequently to be seen wearing a red fez, which he claimed was an aid to his deductive processes.

The role of Paul Harley was played by the distinguished actor Arthur Wontner. Born in 1875, Wontner had begun his lengthy stage career in 1897, and had made his first film, the silent *The Bigamist*, in 1915. His career in films would extend up to 1953, ending with that highly-regarded comedy about vintage cars, *Genevieve*, which starred Kenneth More and Kay Kendall. Wontner's widest fame came with his portrayal of Sherlock Holmes in a series of films produced in Britain from 1930 to 1936.

The *ingenue* role, that of Hilda Norbury, was taken by Cathleen Nesbitt. Miss Nesbitt's stage career had begun in 1910, and was to continue for another forty years. She has played character parts in occasional films, including *Three Coins in the Fountain* (1954) and *The Trygon Factor* (1967).

Ah Fu, the sinister Chinese servant, was portrayed by the Irish character actor Forrester Harvey. Some years after his appearance in Rohmer's play, Harvey transferred his activities to Hollywood, where he appeared in such films as *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932), *The Invisible Man* (1933), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1941), and many others. He died in 1946.

The role of the police inspector was played by another perennial among British character actors, D. A. Clarke-Smith, who later appeared in a few films, such as *The Ghoul* (1933) and *Sabotage* (1936). Both D. A. Clarke-Smith and Forrester Harvey also appeared in Sax Rohmer's later stage effort, the short-lived SECRET EGYPT (1928).

Still another member of the cast would later go on to a long career in British and American films. Edmund Breon (whose real name was MacLaverty) appeared in *The Dawn Patrol* (1930), *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1934), the original *Goodbye Mr. Chips* (1939), *The Woman in the Window* (1945), *Forever Amber* (1948), and many others.

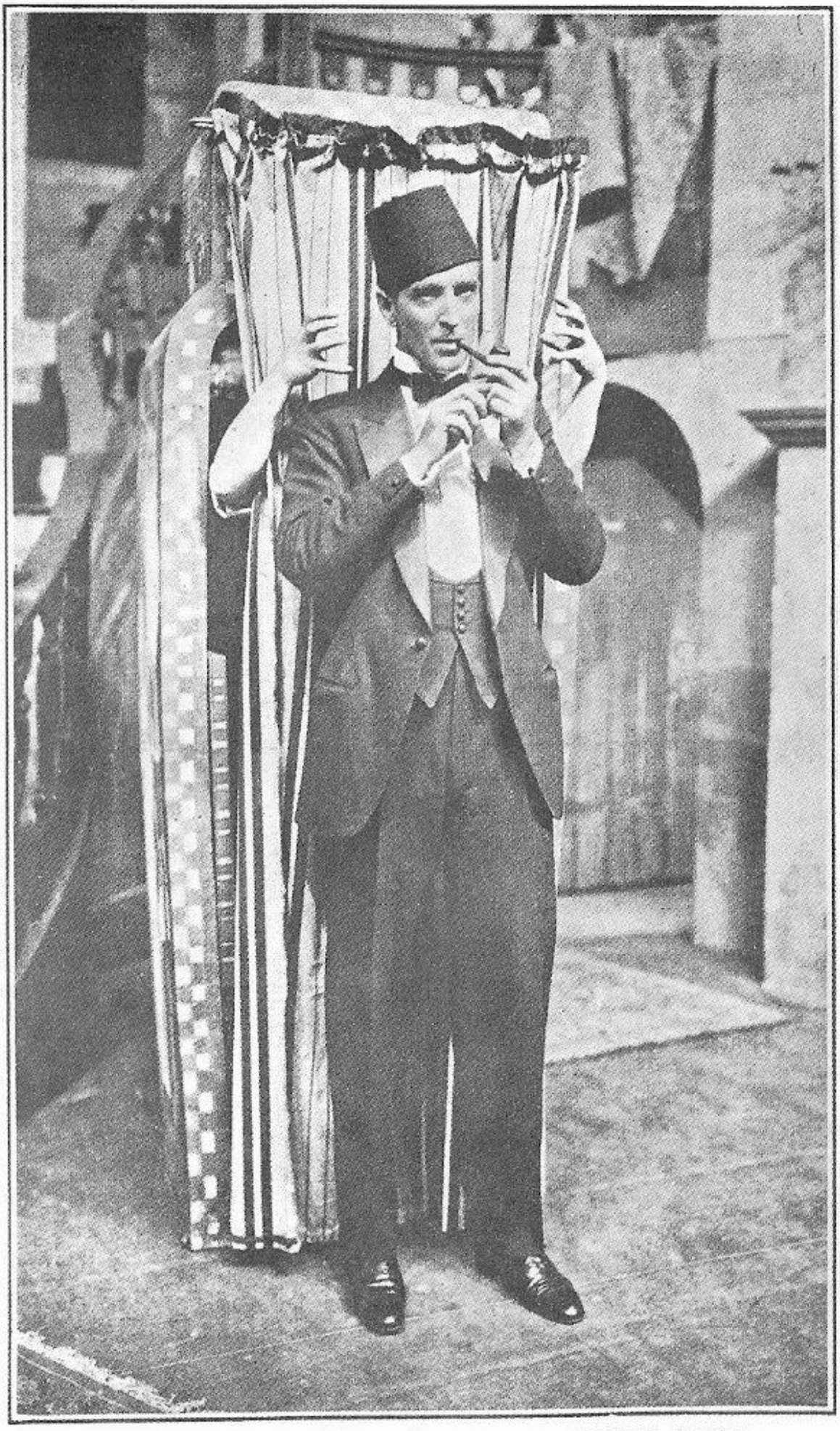
Apparently no copy of the script of THE EYE OF SIVA has survived (hence the somewhat fanciful title on this account). The plot summary which follows is based on a lengthy review of the play by Edward Shanks which appeared in *The Outlook* for September 1, 1923.

The action of the play takes place in the library of Abbeymoat, a Norfolk manor-house, which has been leased by Norris Clay, the celebrated American orientalist and world traveller. Among the furnishings which he has brought with him are an Egyptian mummy-case, converted into a sort of "cosy corner," with a seat inside and a curtain drawn across the front, and a large red statue of Siva, the Indian god of death. The statue was supposedly a present from a friend. Clay has also brought along a live Manchurian leopardess named Kali, and two servants: Rama Dass, the Hindu butler, and Ah Fu, Clay's personal servant. The latter spends much time during the opening scenes of the play engaged in inexplicably altering the position of a certain chair... The remainder of the household consists of Mrs. Marsh, the house-keeper, and her step-daughter, Hilda Norbury.

Shortly before the beginning of the drama proper, the body of a tramp had been found in the manor-house grounds, dead apparently of starvation and exposure. But Norris Clay knows that the death came from another cause: the Smiling Death! And Clay lives in fear of the same fate. For, two or three years earlier, in the course of explorations in Burma, he had stumbled upon the meeting-place of the Council of Seven, the leaders of a vast Asiatic conspiracy against the Western races. He escaped, and returned to England with the story. But his report is still unfinished, and he fears that the Council of Seven will act to prevent its completion.

He has called upon Paul Harley, a Secret Service agent, for help. Excepting Clay, Harley knows more than any other white man about the Council of Seven; thus he, too, is in danger.

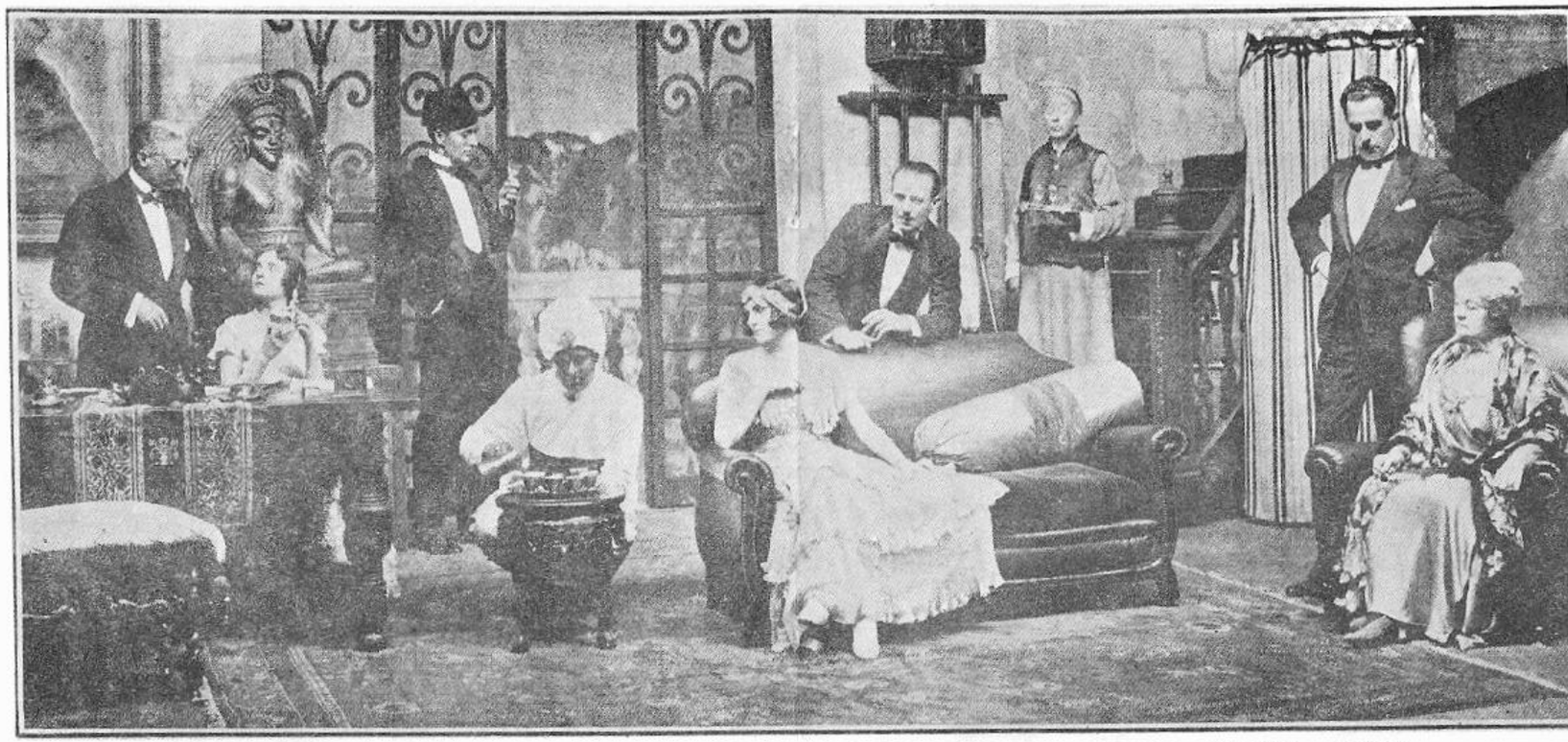
There are stories of a cowled figure having been seen in the grounds at night. On this very evening, a stranger has made his way into Clay's study, whence he was driven away by a dog, which he killed before escaping. Clay reveals that the favorite disguise of the Mandarin Yen Sun Yen, the most dangerous member of the Council of Seven, is the robe of a Tibetan monk; and the knife which killed the dog bore the Mandarin's private insignia on the hilt. In addition, it is now discovered that the red image of Siva was not in fact sent to Clay by a friend, but came from an unknown source, accompanied by a forged letter. And the evening wears on. Harley examines the figure of Siva and makes certain enigmatic calculations, thereafter engaging in a bit of furniture shifting in his own right. He thereupon settles himself in the chair which Ah Fu



THE SECRET SERVICE MAN AND THE HIDDEN HAND

SAX ROHMER'S MYSTERY PLAY

"THE EYE OF SIVA," AT THE NEW THEATRE



WHICH IS THE VILLAIN? THE MIXED COMPANY WHICH GATHERED IN THE COUNTRY HOUSE

The figures from left to right are: Norris Clay, an American Orientalist (Mr. Reginald Bach); Chris Haversham (Miss Kentish); Paul Harley, secret service agent, employed to solve the mystery (Mr. Wontner); the Indian butler (Mr. Malcolm Morley); Hilda Norbury (Miss Cathleen Nesbitt); Bill Haversham (Mr. Breon); Clay's Chinese servant (Mr. Forrester Harvey); Captain Barton (Mr. Warmington); and Mrs. Marsh, Clay's housekeeper (Miss Kate Phillips).

CAST

Paul Harley	Arthur Wontner	Inspector Wootton	D. A. Clarke-Smith
Norris Clay	Reginald Bach	Bird	Joseph Boddy
Captain Barton	S. J. Warmington	His Boy	Reginald Freeman
Bill Haversham	Edmond Breon	Mrs. Marsh	Kate Phillips
Rama Dass	Malcolm Morley	Chris Haversham	Agatha Kentish
Ah Fu	Forrester Harvey	Hilda Norbury	Cathleen Nesbitt

Produced by Benrimo

Opening night: 8 August 1923

[Photos reprinted from *The Graphic*, 8 September 1923]

Stage Photo. Co.

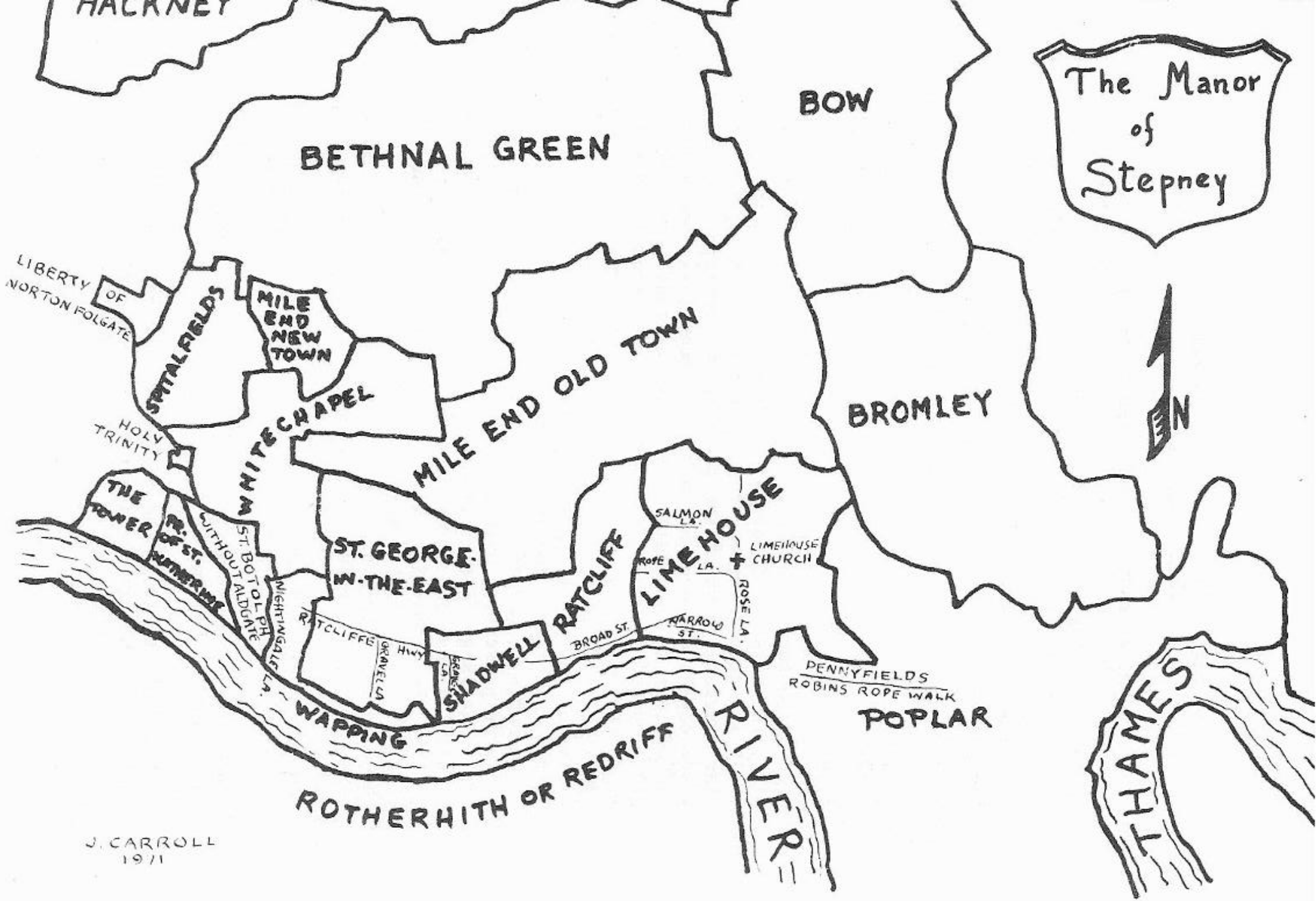
THE TIBET MONK AND HILDA

is always moving, with just his fez showing over the top. Quiet descends, and then, suddenly, from the Eye of Siva a ray of brilliant green light flashes across the room toward the chair! A gasp, a crash, the other house-guests come running, and find---Harley, quite safe. He had cleverly vacated the chair, leaving only the fez attached to the top. He had also shifted the curtained mummy-case into the line of fire, and when the curtain is drawn back it reveals the body of Ah Fu, dead, and with a ghastly grin on his face. He has become a victim of the Smiling Death, which he himself had been manipulating from controls inside the mummy-case. The Smiling Death is a new ray, stolen from its inventor by the Council of Seven, and intended to be their main weapon against white civilization.

Meanwhile, other complications have arisen. Two of Clay's house-guests (who had been invited for dinner, but ordered to remain for the night by Harley when all the suspicious circumstances began turning up) have been behaving very mysteriously. Finally, in defiance of Harley's orders, they leave the house secretly and make their way through the elaborate system of burglar alarms with which the grounds are protected. When they are caught and brought back, the truants---a young lady and an officer in the Indian Army---reveal that they were simply eloping! However, they deny having disconnected the alarm at the main gate, which had failed to sound. Who, then, has done so? The truth springs at once to every mind: the Mandarin Yen Sun Yen is in the grounds of Abbeymoat! Most of the party rushes off, leaving Hilda Norbury alone in the library. Within moments, a cowled figure appears and carries her off. She returns presently, uninjured, and tells the others that her captor is at large in the grounds. At this point the leopardess, Kali, escapes and disappears into the grounds. It becomes clear that the animal is stalking the cowled figure: the progress of their flight is indicated by the flashing lights of the burglar-alarm system, displayed on a large board in the library. Finally the fugitive is caught and brought in, badly mauled.

Harley tears the cowl away and reveals---Norris Clay. And from Clay he removes the wig and dark spectacles, to reveal the Mandarin Yen Sun Yen! It seems that Norris Clay never returned from Burma at all; he was killed there, and the Mandarin sent to England in his place...

It is hard to avoid the feeling that some essential steps are missing, either in the logic of the original play or in the reviewer's account of it. But even from this account, we have enough cause to envy those who visited the New Theater in London in the fall of 1923. ●


HACKNEY
BETHNAL GREEN
BOW
The Manor of Stepney
LIBERTY OF NORTON FOLGATE
SPITALFIELDS
MILE END NEW TOWN
MILE END OLD TOWN
WHITECHAPEL
HOLY TRINITY
BROMLEY
N
THE TOWER
PR. OF ST. KATHERINE
WITHOUT ALDGATE
ST. BOTOLPH
NIGHTINGALE LA.
ST. GEORGE-IN-THE-EAST
RATCLIFFE
LIMEHOUSE
SALMON LA.
LIMEHOUSE CHURCH
ROPE LA.
ROSE LA.
NARROW ST.
BROAD ST.
RATCLIFFE HWY
GRAVEL LA.
SHADWELL
PENNYFIELDS
ROBINS ROPE WALK
POPLAR
WAPPING
ROTHERHITH OR REDRIFF
RIVER
THAMES
J. CARROLL
1971

The Manor of Stepney

by

John E. Carroll

Nearly all of the districts of London which are mentioned most frequently in Sax Rohmer's books were once part of a vast ecclesiastical area known as the Manor of Stepney. The present-day Stepney, containing Limehouse, is only a very small part of this area. The Manor of Stepney extended from Aldgate in the west to the River Lea in the east, and from the Thames to the northern hills. It was composed of seven separate modern parishes and innumerable smaller ecclesiastical divisions.

Originally, the Bishop of London served as Lord of the Manor, until in 1550 Bishop Nicholas Ridley relinquished Stepney to King Edward VI, who later conferred it on Lord Wentworth. This lord retained control over Stepney until the reign of Queen Mary, and his descendants were Lords of the Manor (which included all of the Tower Hamlets, but not the Tower itself) until 1720.

The accompanying map shows the southern part of the Manor as it existed in the early nineteenth century. (The parish of Hackney, which was part of the Manor, extends a considerable distance north of the area shown.) It is quite apparent that the districts of Shadwell, Ratcliff and Limehouse are much the same as described in Rohmer's stories, but that there are some differences pertaining to Wapping and St. George-in-the-East. According to Loftie's A HISTORY OF LONDON (1883), the name Wapping had originally been applied to a much larger region, but had been superceded by the newer name of St. George-in-the-East. Wapping---more fully, Wapping-in-the-Wose, or Wash---now referred only to a river-side district.

[A side-note of interest is that directly across from the Wapping Police Station, on the south side of the Thames, is Hanover Hole ship tier, where colliers tie up while waiting to go upriver to Battersea Power Station. Hanover Hole is referred to in the first Fu Manchu book; see "Limehouse and the River Police," p. 14, in issue #5 of this journal.]

The name Ratcliff (no "e"; referring to the district east of Shadwell) seems to have persisted until Victorian times. One explanation of the name interprets it as meaning "a bank of red clay." A connection has also been suggested with the Earls of Sussex, who were Ratcliffes or Radcliffes.

Ratcliffe Highway was one of the principal thoroughfares

in the Manor, running eastward from the Tower. Loftie's HISTORY states: "Of late it has been called St. George Street; the name of Ratcliffe, except in the vulgar tongue, has disappeared." The area surrounding Ratcliffe Highway had the reputation of being a "rum 'un": in the early 1800s there was a mass murder on the premises of a silk merchant at 29, Ratcliffe Highway, followed by another at The King's Arms, a public house in the neighboring Gravel Lane.

Police Stations off Ratcliffe Highway included Shadwell Police Station in King David Lane and the Old Watch House in Denmark Street (now called Crowder Street) about fifty yards from the latter's junction with the Highway. A police section-house (providing quarters for single men) is now located on the site of the old Shadwell Police Station. Limehouse Police Station was originally a house in Piggott Street, but since 1890 has been located at 29, West India Dock Road. The present station was rebuilt on the site of the former structure in 1930. Piggott Street was a mere square in length, joining Commercial Road to Stainsby Road and lying to the west of the latter.

It has already been noted (see "Letters to Limehouse" in issue #5 of this journal) that some of the street and district names used in Sax Rohmer's books cannot be found on maps or in guide-books of the period in which he wrote. It now seems evident that Rohmer, growing up in London in the 1880s and 1890s, absorbed much of the older nomenclature, officially obsolescent but still in popular use, and preserved it in his stories. ●

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THE SOUND OF FU MANCHU

by Leslie Charteris

Some time ago, as my mind was wandering idly around nowhere, as it often does, it suddenly occurred to me to wonder, for no reason at all, what Sax Rohmer had in mind when he named his famous master villain Fu Manchu.

I have been quizzed too often myself about what made me hit on the names "Simon Templar" and "The Saint" to be willing to inflict the same martyrdom on Mr. Rohmer, even if it had been possible. But since he passed on a few years ago to whatever Valhalla there may be for writers, I did not even have to fight a temptation. So instead of writing and asking him the silly question, I had to attempt some research of my own.

The Manchus, of course, were an Asian tribe who took over a corner of the continent which naturally became known as Manchuria, where they established a dynasty in 1644. It is worth noting that as a race they were tall, slender, well-formed, and did *not* have slanting eyes. "Manchu", then, is simply a proper name that might be compared with "Scott," or if you like, with "Tudor", a dynasty which reigned in England about the same time.

The word "Fu", however, is much more difficult. Since Chinese is a monosyllabic language, and the number of possible monosyllables is somewhat limited, they have to make the same monosyllable serve several different purposes, distinguishing the meanings by the tone in which they are spoken. Thus "Fu" can mean, according to how you say it---

1: with a level intonation: *man* or *husband*
2: with a rising intonation: *fortune* or *happiness*
3: with a sharply rising inflection: *prefecture*
4: with a downward inflection: *rich*.

At this point scholarship is stymied, without knowing how Mr. Rohmer himself pronounced the name. Perhaps he knew this, and counted on that gimmick to preserve his mystery. It seems a pity, after all, that it is now too late to ask him. Unless some spiritualist medium can send us a tape recording of Mr. Rohmer's disembodied voice, the answer is open to anyone's guess. I only feel reasonably certain that the third intonation is quite improbable. ●

Originally published as an untitled column in THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE, May 1962. *Copyright 1962 by Leslie Charteris, and reprinted by his permission.*

THE MAN WHO NEVER *SAID* ANYTHING

by John Harwood

In J. C. Squire's essay reprinted in *The Rohmer Review #4*, the impression is given that Nayland Smith almost never *said* anything, but rather (as if in a perpetual mood of irritation) kept his friends and colleagues on edge by rapping and snapping his conversation, or even jerking or hissing it. This impression, however, is not supported by the facts.

Unusual things always stand out from the commonplace. When walking down the street one may pass the usual number of dogs and cats without paying particular notice, but a glimpse of an elephant in someone's front yard will stand out in one's mind. Such an effect might explain why Mr. Squire thought that Sax Rohmer used words such as "rapped" or "snapped" more often than he did the word "said." "To say" being the most common verb used to indicate written dialogue, readers usually pass over it without really thinking about it. On the other hand, encountering an uncommon word several times in the course of a single book, a reader may come to believe that the author has used it more often than is actually the case.

As the following table indicates, "said" was by far the most common speech indicator attached to Nayland Smith's conversation, having been used almost one-third of the time. The table covers only the first three Fu Manchu books (the only ones published at the time Squire's essay was written), and lists those terms which appeared five or more times in a single book.

Term	*Insidious*	*Return*	*Hand*	*Totals*
added	2	5	8	15
asked	15	4	3	22
continued	1	16	10	27
cried	19	27	31	77
demanded	3	4	10	17
directed	5	5	5	15
explained	5	1	2	8
hissed	6	7	1	14
interrupted	4	6	5	15
jerked	12	6	1	19
muttered	11	8	7	26
rapped	30	16	13	59
replied	25	21	18	64
said	119	73	68	260
snapped	9	34	53	96
whispered	18	23	13	54
Totals	284	256	248	788

Letters to Limehouse

From JAMES WADE, Seoul, Korea:

It is good to see TRR keeping up its high standards after the move to a most appropriate new city.

As to the Dantean piece by Mr. Christopher ["Dantean Allusions in THE TRAIL OF FU MANCHU," TRR #5], long ago I read and for some reason remembered, without recalling the source, a statement to the effect that Dante had the smallest brain, in size and weight, of any genius whose cranial capacities ever received this dubious post-mortem investigation. Therefore, if this datum is correct, Mr. Christopher's assumption that the Dantean comparison suggests the notion of "an unusually large head" for Fu would be unfounded. Of course, just as in his literary allusions, Rohmer was writing from popular notions and folklore, not knowledge. The "brow of Shakespeare" comparison always used for Fu suggests a bulging cranium in the sense that the popular bust of WS has a balding forehead that creates the illusion of a domelike cranium. The analogous bust of Dante has some sort of fillet or headpiece that might also suggest an unusually large head. Whether Rohmer ever heard the story of Dante's brain size is doubtful; and whether brain size would be markedly reflected in outer dimensions of the skull would be a question for Dr. Rossman's consideration.

The quintessential piece you should republish, of course, is the satire "What Big Green Eyes You Have, Doctor!" by S. J. Perelman. Whether this is too irreverent is open to speculation; but it is the best piece of writing that Rohmer has evoked yet.

Mr. Wade contributed the "Sinitic Sonnet" published in issue #4, and will have a short pastiche of Fu Manchu in the next issue of Luther Norris's Pontine Dossier.

Perelman's insidious take-off on Fu was reprinted in the omnibus volume THE MOST OF S. J. PERELMAN, which I believe is still in print.

From GEORGE H. RECORD, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I am forming a club similar to the Praed Street Irregulars for persons interested in weird and supernatural fiction of the type published by Arkham House. Those interested should write to me at 4272 Sheppard Drive, Las Vegas, Nevada 89109.

From RAY STANICH, Brooklyn, New York:

I've been doing research on old radio programs: specifically Ellery Queen, Arch Oboler plays, etc. While digging, I came across the following series:

"Shadow of Fu Manchu" - Mon/Wed/Fri - 18 Mar through 9 Nov 1940 (a total of 77 shows).

These were the New York dates; with the use of transcriptions, dates would vary from city to city in the same season. I'll be digging further back to the late 20s through 1939. I hope to find the string of Fu Manchu programs on the Collier Hour.

From HENRY E. WENDEN, Worthington, Ohio:

From the lady on the cover (Sekhmet?) to "Letters to Limehouse," I enjoyed all of #5. Particularly to my fancy was the article on Limehouse and the River Police. I wish that I had had as much of an opportunity to study the area as Mr. Carroll seems to have had. However, when I was last in London in 1966, I spent as much time as I could on and near the river. This predilection would be understood by any true Londoner, most of whom seem to love their dirty, fascinating river as much as I do. I have some pictures of the River Police patrol boats, Wapping Old Stairs, etc., but I encountered more Rohmeresque, wet, foul weather than I did photographic weather. It was a curious feeling to purchase the makings in a neat, definitely Occidental supermarket and sit in Limehouse churchyard eating my picnic lunch, gazing at the businesslike, unromantic scene that has replaced the pre-WW II Limehouse of our fond fictional memories.

One photo of Wapping Old Stairs was taken from the river, at low tide. Details of washing on the line, the moored boats, etc., suggest a little of the vanished pre-war Fu Manchu-ish flavour of Wapping. Much of Wapping is rather antiseptic and very business-like since the Blitz. Another photo shows Wapping Old Stairs at high tide. The oily suck of the Thames around the weathered stone suggests grisly secrets, which turn out to be floating vegetables and other depressingly modern flotsam. Still another photo is of King Henry's Stairs, nearby along Wapping High Street. The presence of a moored boat is accounted for, not by any sinister rendezvous but by the presence of a rather well-concealed pub at the head of the stairs (or very close by, my memory is imperfect). There is a famous old pub along here that overhangs the river, but I didn't find it, and I recall drinking my pint in a sort of wharf-shed, with very crude tables made of kegs, on the occasion of these

pictures. My best picture, I think, is of a River Police boat setting out into the sunset-gilded river, her upper works ablaze with the last light, starting a night patrol. What headless dacoits or foully murdered sailors will it discover?

Returning to the cover of TRR #5, I suspected that Bâst was intended, but thought she looked a little heavy about the lower jaw to be a domestic pussycat, and thought there was more of the lioness about her. You probably know the magnificent seated statue of Sekhmet in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, on which my mental image of her is based. It is in a dark stone of the type archaeologists like to call "diorite."

I am delighted to learn of the numerous university people on TRR's subscription list; it confirms my long-held opinion that reading Sax Rohmer does not necessarily constitute a low taste in literature. Quite the contrary, I now feel quite proud of my stubbornly maintained preferences.

Very much to my irritation, I wasted a little more time on that Zagazig business, chiefly because there seemed to be a feeling that Dr. Petrie could not have cracked it in the time allowed. As a matter of fact, except for the unusually high frequency of *h* and *y*, caused by "Smith," "Joy," and "-day," the Zagazig messages could almost serve as a textbook example of the ease with which a simple substitution cipher can be decoded on the basis of frequency, doubled letters and common endings. If Dr. Petrie ever did the cryptograms in his favourite newspaper, he could certainly have done the Zagazig in half an hour.

In spite of appearances, the lady on the cover of TRR #5 was Bâst, not Sekhmet. The design was copied from one of the plates in E. A. Wallis Budge's THE GODS OF THE EGYPTIANS. This work, originally published in 1904, is currently available in a two-volume paperbound reprint from Dover Publications, and is recommended to anyone with more than a passing interest in Egyptian mythology. The same work is the source of this issue's cover design, whose subject will be left to the readers to identify. (The personage shown, like Bâst, figures prominently in one or more of Sax Rohmer's stories.)

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The Rohmer Review is edited and published for
The Sax Rohmer Society by

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245 Lafayette Street, Apt. 3G
Salem, Massachusetts 01970.

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Subscriptions for the current series (issues 5-7) are $2.00. Back issues available: #3 (50¢) and #5 (75¢); issues 1, 2, and 4 are out of print. First-class mailing available at 10¢ extra per issue.

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